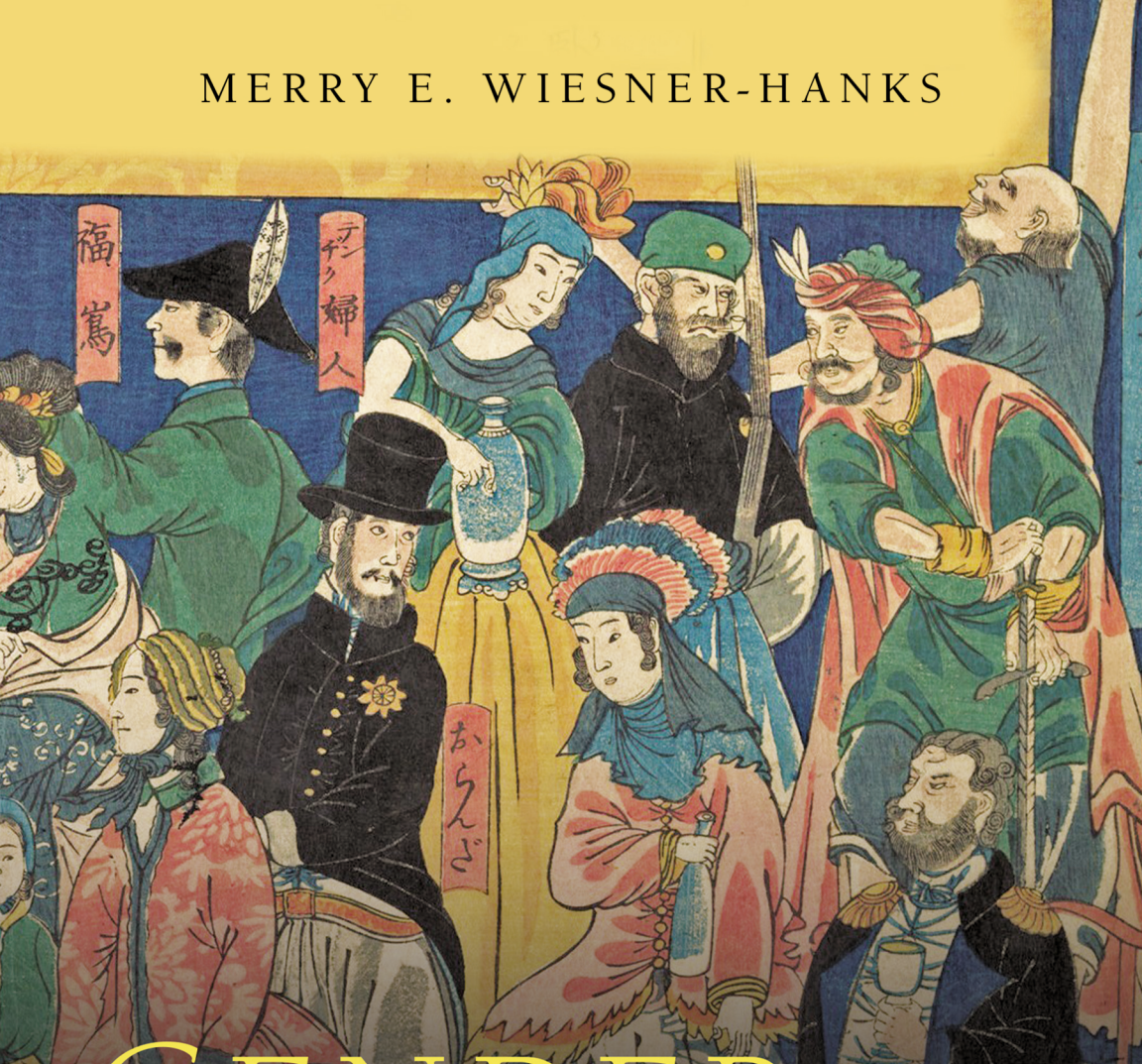
MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS



GENDER IN HISTORY

Global Perspectives

Third Edition

with website

WILEY Blackwell

Gender in History

Gender in History

Global Perspectives

Third Edition

MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS

University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI

WILEY Blackwell

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About the Companion Website

This book is accompanied by an instructor companion website.

www.wiley.com\go\wiesner-hanks\genderinhistory3e

This website includes

- Original Sources
- Further Readings

Chapter One

Introduction

The title of this book would have made little sense to me when I chose to be a history major nearly five decades ago. I might perhaps have thought it an analysis of linguistic developments, as gender was something I considered (and bemoaned) largely when learning German nouns. The women's movement changed that, as it changed so much else. The feminist movement that began in the 1960s – often termed the "second wave" to set it apart from the "first wave" of feminism that began in the nineteenth century – included a wide range of political beliefs, with various groups working for a broad spectrum of goals, one of which was to understand more about the lives of women in the past. This paralleled a similar rise of interest in women's history that accompanied the first wave of feminism.

Women's and Gender History

Advocates of women's rights in the present, myself included, looked at what we had been taught about the past – as well as what we had been taught about literature, psychology, religion, biology, and most other disciplines – and realized we were hearing only half the story. Most of the studies we read or heard described the male experience – "man the artist," "man the hunter," "man and his environment" – though they often portrayed it as universal. We began to investigate the lives of women in the past, asserting that any investigation of past power relationships had to include discussion of patriarchy, that predominant social system in which men have more power and access to resources than women of the

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same group, and in which some men are privileged over other men and some women over other women.

Women's historians often began by fitting women into familiar historical categories – nations, historical periods, social classes, religious allegiance – and then realized that this approach, sarcastically labeled "add women and stir," was unsatisfying. Focusing on women often disrupted the familiar categories and forced a rethinking of the way that history was organized and structured. The European Renaissance and Enlightenment lost some of their luster once women were included, as did the democracy of ancient Athens or Jacksonian America.

This disruption of well-known categories and paradigms ultimately included the topic that had long been considered the proper focus of all history – man. Viewing the male experience as universal had not only hidden women's history, but it had also prevented analysis of men's experiences as those of men. The very words used to describe individuals – "artist" and "woman artist," for example, or "scientist" and "woman scientist" – encouraged one to think about how being female affected Georgia O'Keeffe or Marie Curie while overlooking the ways that being male shaped the experiences of Michelangelo or Picasso or Isaac Newton. Historians familiar with studying women increasingly began to discuss the ways in which systems of sexual differentiation affected both women and men, and by the early 1980s to use the word "gender" to describe these systems. ("Gender" derives from the Latin word *genus*, meaning "kind" or "type," and originally referred to types of nouns, of which there were three in Latin: masculine, feminine, and neuter.) At that point, they differentiated primarily between "sex," by which they meant physical, morphological, and anatomical differences (what are often called "biological differences") and "gender," by which they meant a culturally constructed, historically changing, and often unstable system of differences. Most of the studies with "gender" in the title still focused on women – and women's history continued as its own field – but a few looked equally at both sexes or concentrated on the male experience, calling their work "men's history" or the "new men's studies."

Historians interested in this new perspective asserted that gender was an appropriate category of analysis when looking at *all* historical developments, not simply those involving women or the family. *Every* political, intellectual, religious, economic, social, and even military change had an impact on the actions and roles of men and women, and, conversely, a culture's gender structures influenced every other structure or development. People's notions of gender shaped not only the way they thought about men and women, but the way they thought about their society in general. As the historian Joan Scott put it in an extremely influential 1986 article, "Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived

differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power."[1] Thus hierarchies in other realms of life were often expressed in terms of gender, with dominant individuals or groups described in masculine terms and dependent ones in feminine. These ideas in turn affected the way people acted, though explicit and symbolic ideas of gender could also conflict with the way men and women chose or were forced to operate in the world.

Historians were not the only ones to begin using the concept and word "gender." It spread in other academic fields and then into ordinary speech, becoming the accepted replacement for "sex" in many common phrases – "gender roles," "gender distinctions," and so on.

Along with a focus on the gendered nature of both women's and men's experiences, some historians turned their attention more fully in the 1980s to the history of sexuality. "Sexuality" is a modern word used to describe the range of acts related to erotic desire, romance, and reproduction, and the meanings attached to them, and some scholars choose to avoid it for earlier periods, arguing that it is anachronistic. But investigations of the past are always informed by more recent understandings and concerns, and using modern concepts can often provide great insights. Thus most scholars use "sexuality," while recognizing the enormous diversity on all matters relating to sex across time and space.

Just as interest in women's history has been part of feminist political movements, interest in the history of sexuality has been part of the gay liberation movement that began in the 1970s. The gay liberation movement encouraged the study of homosexuality in the past and present and the development of gay and lesbian studies programs, and it also made both public and academic discussions of sexual matters more acceptable. Historians have attempted to trace the history of men's and women's sexual experiences in the past and, as in women's history, to find new sources that will allow fuller understanding. For example, they realized that the idea that everyone has a "sexual orientation" as a part of their identity developed historically and was culturally constructed. (For more on this, see the section "Modern Sexuality" in Chapter 8.) The history of sexuality has contributed to a new interest in the history of the body, with historians investigating how cultural understandings of the body shaped people's experiences of their own bodies and also studying the ways in which religious, medical, and political authorities exerted control over those bodies.

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[1] Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91:5 (1986), 1053–75; citation 1067.

World and Global History

The subtitle of this book, "global perspectives," highlights another development in history over the past half century: the growth of world, global, and other types of history that use a wide spatial lens. Until the last half of the twentieth century, most professional history – that is, history written by people trained at universities – focused on nation-states, and especially their political and military history. But during the 1960s, scholars and teachers began to challenge nationally organized histories. In North America, area studies programs at universities increasingly trained people to study many parts of the world, some professional historians began to write works with a broad scope, and college instructors and high school teachers created courses in world history. In Europe, the study of diplomacy gradually widened into imperial, international, and what was termed "overseas" history. Beginning in the 1980s, scholars in Asia, Africa, and Latin America critiqued much existing world and international history as overly centered on Europe, and posited different centers or called for a more polycentric world history. The 1990s brought other new directions, including transnational history, Atlantic World history, borderlands histories, connected history, world systems history, diasporic history, and many others. Some historians began to describe their field as global history, to reflect the increasing integration of world regions into a single system through globalization, though other historians (including me) see world and global history as largely the same.

Like women's and gender history, world and global history have had their own debates and controversies about conceptualizations, inclusion, and scope. Courses often began as ones on various "civilizations" around the world considered separately, which tended to promote a binary model of "the West and the rest," with an overemphasis on the West that in the 1980s came to be labeled "Eurocentrism." Gradually many of those teaching world history rejected that model in favor of one that emphasized connections, interactions, and multipronged comparisons. Today world historians tend to de-emphasize individual nations or civilizations, and focus instead on regions defined differently, including zones of interaction, or on the ways in which people, goods, and ideas moved across regions through migration, conquest, and trade. Most world historians think that history should be studied on a range of chronological and spatial scales, including, but not limited to, very large ones.

Until about 2000, there was little connection between the history of women, gender, and sexuality and world/global history. In part this was because both of these fields developed at the same time as revisionist interpretations arguing that the standard story needed to be made broader and

much more complex. Each disrupted a topic that was seen as the natural and proper focus of historical scholarship: heterosexual man on the one hand, and the nation on the other. Thus both have been viewed by those hostile or uninterested as "having an agenda." Both concentrated on their own lines of revision, so did not pay much attention to what is going on in the other. In addition, world/global history tended to focus on large-scale political and economic processes carried out by governments and commercial elites. Most of the people involved were men, but how gender shaped their experience was not evaluated, as the emphasis was on material rather than cultural factors: ships, guns, trade goods, factories, railroads, satellites. Women's history also initially had a strong materialist wing, with many studies of work and political movements, but over the past several decades it has paid more attention to cultural issues, representation, and meaning, which has also characterized the history of sexuality. Historians of women, gender, and sexuality have tended to have a narrower range of focus, choosing to study individuals, families, circles of friends, and other small groups, and have been worried that these would get lost in narratives that emphasize impersonal processes. Their analyses have generally stayed within one nation, and many within one region or city.

This lack of intersection is beginning to change, however, which is what makes this book possible. It is based on hundreds of articles and books that focus on gender and related topics in different parts of the world, and increasing numbers that make comparisons, evaluate exchange and interaction, study borderlands and migration, and otherwise incorporate theory and methods that also characterize world/global history. There was very little of this when I published the first edition of this book 20 years ago, but the amount of scholarship that is both gendered and global grows steadily. This scholarship is based on new research, and also on reevaluating older research with an eye to assumptions about gender that are incorrect or misleading. For example, the Supreme Being in the Maa language of the Maasai and other groups in East Africa is known as *Enkai*, a feminine singular noun, and envisioned as a woman. Christian missionaries and European colonial officials generally referred to *Enkai* instead as "he" when writing in English, as this fit with Christian understandings of what Supreme Beings should be. Doing comparative or world history often means relying on translations – there is simply no way to know all the languages of even a part of the world – but translation always involves choice, and in this case the choice was wrong. So newer scholarship about the Maasai, and about encounters between the Maasai and Europeans, corrects *Enkai's* gender. Feminist world historians emphasize the importance of finding translations and using secondary studies that are more accurate and thus culturally sensitive, especially for things as central as gender (or Supreme Beings).

Before delving into what the new scholarship on gender in world history reveals, it is valuable to look at some of the key issues that gender historians have wrestled with in more detail. These have shaped the path historians and scholars in other fields have taken as they approach the past.

Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

Just at the point that historians and their students were gradually beginning to see the distinction between sex and gender (and an increasing number accepting the importance of gender as a category of analysis), that distinction became contested. Not only were there great debates about where the line should be drawn – were women "biologically" more peaceful and men "biologically" more skillful at math, or were such tendencies the result solely of their upbringing? – but some scholars wondered whether social gender and biological sex are so interrelated that any distinction between the two is meaningless.

For example, although most people are born with external genitalia through which they are categorized "male" or "female" at birth, some are not. Their external genitalia may be ambiguous, a condition now generally termed "intersex," though earlier termed "hermaphroditism." Closer physical examination may also reveal internal sexual and reproductive anatomy that do match those usually defined as "male" or "female." In earlier times most intersex people were simply assigned to the sex they most closely resembled, with their condition only becoming a matter of historical record if they came to the attention of religious, medical, or legal authorities. Since the nineteenth century this gender assignment was sometimes reinforced by surgical procedures modifying or removing the body parts that did not fit with the chosen gender. Thus in these cases "gender" determined "sex" rather than the other way around.

Because the physical body could be ambiguous, scientists began to stress the importance of other indicators of sex difference. By the 1970s chromosomes were the favored marker, and quickly became part of popular as well as scientific understandings. In 1972, for example, the International Olympic Committee determined that simply "looking like" a woman was not enough, but that athletes would have to prove their "femaleness" through a chromosome test; an individual with certain types of chromosomal abnormalities would be judged "male" even if that person had been regarded as "female" since birth, and had breasts and a vagina but no penis. The problem with chromosomes is that they are also not perfectly dichotomous, but may involve ambiguous intermediate categories, so that more recently the source of sex differences has also been sought in prenatal hormones, including androgen and testosterone. Tests came to evaluate all of these factors: in

2009, the International Association of Athletics Federations required South African middle-distance runner Caster Semenya to undergo an examination of her external genitals, internal reproductive organs (through ultrasound), chromosomes, and hormones before it would allow her to compete as female.

Given the uncertainties in most "biological" markers, the intensity of the search for an infallible marker of sex difference suggests that cultural norms about gender (that everyone *should* be a man or a woman) are influencing science. Preexisting ideas about gender shape many other scientific fields as well; the uniting of sperm and egg, for example, was long described as the "vigorous, powerful" sperm "defeating all others" and attaching itself to a "passive, receptive" egg. (The egg is now known to be active in this process.)

The arbitrary and culturally produced nature of gender has been challenged by transgender as well as intersex individuals. Transgender, or simply "trans," is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they are assigned at birth. "Transsexual" is often used for those transgender people who decide to transition to the gender with which they identify through sex reassignment surgery, now often called gender confirmation surgery, which has been available since the 1950s. (In this, the word "sex" refers to the physical aspects of a sexed body, not sexual orientation, as being transgender is not related to sexual orientation.) Transgender individuals may also understand themselves to be a third gender that is neither male nor female, both male and female, moving between male and female, or in some other way outside a dichotomous gender system. Because in English and many other languages pronouns are gendered, new pronouns have been developed. These have included "ze" and "hir," and since 2010 the singular "they" has become increasingly common, chosen by people whose gender identity is nonbinary or by those who don't want to go by pronouns with a traditional gender association.

Over the past several decades, the trans rights movement has advocated worldwide for legal recognition and other rights. Both activists and scholars often linked gender and sexual categories into an ever-lengthening list, which settled in the 2010s into LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer) or LGBTQ+, with the "+" representing all other possible categories.

As has been true with the women's and gay-rights movements, people involved in the trans movement also study people in the past they identify as sharing their experiences, as do scholars interested in gender and sexuality more broadly. Some use gender-neutral pronouns when a historic figure engages in actions that suggest they saw themselves as somehow outside the gender binary or whose gender identity changed over their life.

Finding individuals who were outside a dichotomous gender system has not been difficult, as many of the world's cultures have a third or even a fourth and fifth gender, often with specialized religious or ceremonial roles.

In some cultures, gender is determined by one's relationship to reproduction, so that adults are gendered male and female, but children and old people are regarded as different genders; in such cultures there are thus four genders, with linguistic, clothing, and behavioral distinctions for each one. In a number of areas throughout the world, including Alaska, the Amazon region, North America, Australia, Siberia, Central and South Asia, Oceania, and the Sudan, individuals who were originally viewed as male or female assume (or assumed, for in many areas such practices have ended) the gender identity of the other sex or combine the tasks, behavior, and clothing of men and women. Some of these individuals are intersex and occasionally they are eunuchs (castrated males), but more commonly they are morphologically male or female. For them, gender attribution is not based on genitals, and may change throughout their life. The best known of these third-gender individuals are found among several Native American peoples, and the Europeans who first encountered them regarded them as homosexuals and called them "berdaches," from an Arabic word for male prostitute. Now most scholars and the individuals themselves choose to use the term "two-spirit people," and note that they are distinguished from other men or women by their work or religious roles than by their sexual activities; they are usually thought of as a third gender rather than effeminate males or masculine women. (For more on two-spirit people in the Americas, see the section "Religious Traditions Transmitted Orally" in Chapter 6.)

Both historical and contemporary examples of third (or fourth or fifth) genders and categories of sexual orientation are receiving a great deal of study today, and are often used by people within the LGBTQ+ community to demonstrate both the extent of nondichotomous understandings and the socially constructed and historically variable nature of all notions of gender and sexual difference. In some areas, there has been a blending of older third gender categories and more recent forms of expressing LGBTQ+ identity, as contemporary groups assert their connections with older traditions within their own culture. For example, beginning in the 1990s, two-spirit societies were formed throughout much of the United States and Canada, and in the early 2000s, the Asian and Pacific Islander LGBT student organization at the University of California at Los Angeles chose the name "Mahu" for their group, in reference to the traditional Polynesian third gender category.

Thus for a number of reasons, the border between "biological" sex and "cultural" gender carefully created by gender scholarship in the 1980s had by several decades later become increasingly permeable, unstable, and murky, and has remained so. The same has been true for the boundaries between the physical body and cultural forces on the issue of sexual orientation and other aspects of sexuality. Some scientists have attempted to find a "gay gene," while others see this as a futile search for something that is completely socially constructed. And some condemn all such research as efforts

to legitimize an immoral "lifestyle choice." The complexities of gender and sexuality are threatening to some, but research in many disciplines continues to provide evidence for them.

Difference and Intersectionality

Historians of women were key voices in debates about the distinction between gender and sex and about categories of sexual and gender identity. They also put increasing emphasis on differences among women, noting that women's experiences differed because of class, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and other factors, and they varied over time. Because of these differences, some wondered, did it make sense to talk about "women" at all? If, for example, women were thought to be delicate guardians of the home, as was true in the nineteenth-century United States, then were Black women, who worked in fields alongside men, really "women"? If women were thought to be inferior and irrational (as they were in many cultures) then was Queen Elizabeth I of England a "woman"? Was "woman" a valid category, the meaning of which is self-evident and unchanging over time, or is arguing for any biological base for gender difference naïve "essentialism"? These historians noted that not only in the present is gender "performative," that is, a role that can be taken on or changed at will, but it was so at many points in the past, as individuals "did gender" and conformed to or challenged gender roles. Thus it is misguided to think that we are studying women (or men, for that matter) as a sex, they argued, for the only thing that is in the historical record is gender. In the 2000s, some scholars and activists advocated using "woman-identified" or "female-identified" instead of "woman," as these seemed to better include trans women. ("Woman-identified" had a different meaning in the 1970s, when early feminists used it to mean women who did not look to men for affirmation.) Patriarchy largely disappeared as an analytical framework as well, as it, too, seemed essentialist and falsely universalizing.

Recognizing difference was not enough, asserted some scholars, who stressed that these categories were not simply matters of identity, but also oppression. They noted that feminist scholarship had sometimes taken the experiences of heterosexual white women as normative, and argued that the experiences of women of color must be recognized as distinctive. The nature of oppression is multiplicative rather than additive, and no one identity – race, class, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and so on – should be considered apart from other identities, but is always materialized in terms of and by means of them. The idea that multiple forms of oppression interact and combine was part of the thinking of feminist groups that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, which is not surprising, as so many founders of women's

liberation had been active in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, the latter both anti-racist and anti-imperialist. Socialist feminists expanded Marxist analysis of labor exploitation in production to examine paid and unpaid household labor, through which working-class as well as wealthier men benefited from the unpaid work of their female family members. In addition, prosperous women benefited when they could hire poorer women – usually women of color and foreign born – for child care and housecleaning.

Even before the 1960s, Black left feminists such as Louise Thompson Patterson wrote about the "triple exploitation" of race, gender, and class. Feminists of color analyzed what Fran Beal of the Third World Women's Alliance termed the "double jeopardy" of being both Black and female. In 1977, the Black lesbian feminist Combahee River Collective asserted in a statement mostly written by Barbara Smith: "We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based on the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives."[2] In 1989, the critical race theorist and feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw called this synthesis of oppression "intersectionality," a concept and word that slowly spread into other academic fields.

Just as gender had earlier, intersectionality moved from academia and feminist activism into ordinary speech. By the 2010s it had itself become a category of identity, with people using "intersectional feminist" to describe themselves on their blogs, Facebook pages, protest signs, T-shirts, and Twitter or Tumblr posts. Many sport a quotation from Flavia Dzodan, a writer who lives and works in Amsterdam, taken from her 2011 blog post on *Tiger Beatdown*: "My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit." "Patriarchy" has returned on some of those signs as well: On Wednesdays We Smash the Patriarchy; Destroy the Patriarchy, Not the Planet.

Along with moving from academia into popular culture, the concept of intersectionality has also become increasingly dynamic and global, analyzing (and critiquing) structures of power and oppression that arise from a variety of situations. Scholars have not simply used social groupings drawn from the Western past and present, but have elaborated social categories taken from local understandings as well. To Smith's Big Four (race, class, gender, and sexuality), scholars have added religion, age grades, ethnicity, and other factors as key social structures operating in the societies

[2] In Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), pp. 264–74; citation 264.

they study, past and present. They have also subtracted one or more of the Big Four, arguing, for example, that gender as it is understood in the West was not an important category of analysis or oppression in many sub-Saharan African societies. Sometimes this analysis has been explicitly intersectional – that is, situating itself theoretically within the development of the concept – but more often it has been implicitly so, investigating the ways in which two or more of these social systems operate together in the shaping of individual and group experience, but not necessarily describing this as intersectional.

Theory in History

Debates within women's, gender, and sexuality history in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century were both a reflection and cause of broader debates about the methods and function of history itself. Historians have long recognized that documents and other types of evidence are produced by individuals or groups with particular interests that consciously and unconsciously shape the content of such sources. During the 1980s, some historians began to assert that because historical sources always present a biased and partial picture, we can never fully determine what happened or why; to try to do so is foolish or misguided. What historians should do instead is to analyze the written and visual materials of the past – what is often termed "discourse" – to determine the way various things are "represented" in them and their possible meanings. This heightened interest in discourse among historians, usually labeled the "linguistic/cultural turn," drew on the ideas of literary and linguistic theory – often loosely termed "deconstruction" or "poststructuralism" – about the power of language. Language is so powerful, argued some theorists, that it determines, rather than simply describes, our understanding of the world; knowledge is passed down through language, and knowledge is power.

This emphasis on the relationship of knowledge to power, and on the power of language, made poststructuralism attractive to feminist scholars in many disciplines, who themselves already emphasized the ways language and other structures of knowledge excluded women. The French philosopher Michel Foucault's insight that power comes from everywhere fit with feminist recognition that misogyny and other forces that limited women's lives could be found in many places: in fashion magazines, fairy tales, and jokes told at work, as well as overt job discrimination and domestic violence. Historians of gender were thus prominent exponents of the linguistic turn, and many analyzed representations of women, men, the body, sexual actions, and related topics within different types of discourses.

The linguistic/cultural turn – which happened in other fields along with history – elicited harsh responses from other historians, however, including many who focused on women and gender. They asserted that it denied women the ability to shape their world – what is usually termed "agency" – in both past and present by positing unchangeable linguistic structures. Wasn't it ironic, they noted, that just as women were learning they *had* a history and asserting they were *part* of history, "history" became just a text? They wondered whether the ideas that gender – and perhaps even "women" – were simply historical constructs denied the very real oppression that many women in the past (and present) experienced. Such doubts were extended to other groups as well. If gender, sexuality, race, and other categories are all simply unstable and changing historical or social constructs, how do we understand intersectional oppression, and use this knowledge as a basis for engaged scholarship or activism? Advocates of the linguistic turn argued that their work *was* politically engaged because it critically examined the dynamics and cultural practices of power. Disagreements were sharp and sometimes personal, but by the 2010s, that debate seemed to have run its course. As Lynn Hunt – a powerful force in the cultural turn – commented, "most historians have simply moved on, incorporating insights from postmodern positions but not feeling obliged to take a stand on its epistemological claims."[3]

The linguistic/cultural turn was only one of many "turns" that have shaped historical scholarship on gender and influenced history as a whole over the past several decades. For example, the "spatial turn" has led scholars to more closely examine borders and their permeability, connections and interactions, frontiers, actual and imagined spatial crossings, migration and displacement, and the natural and built environment. They have argued that space is both a geopolitical formation and a way of perceiving, producing, and organizing knowledge, and as such is deeply gendered. The "emotional turn" has led historians to seek to understand the changing meanings and consequences of emotional concepts, expression, and regulation. They have studied norms and standards that societies and groups maintained toward emotions, investigated anger, sadness, jealousy, desire, and other specific emotions, and looked at the interplay between emotions and other aspects of society. The "material turn" has brought a greater emphasis on material culture along with written texts as sources of historical knowledge. Material culture studies, an interdisciplinary field with roots in art history, archaeology, anthropology, and history, is both a method by which one can evaluate and analyze objects and a theory able to assess the role of objects and the relationships between things and people in the creation and

[3] Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York: Norton, 2015), p. 39.

transformation of society and culture. It was originally mainly androcentric, and either oblivious or hostile to using gender as a category of analysis, but the critiques and research of feminist art historians, archaeologists, and historians have begun to change this.

New theoretical perspectives are adding additional complexity and bringing in still more questions. One of these is queer theory, which was developed in the early 1990s – a period of intense HIV-AIDS activism – by scholars in several different fields who combined elements of gay and lesbian studies with other concepts originating in literary and feminist analysis. Queer theorists argued that sexual notions were central to all aspects of culture, and called for greater attention to sexuality that was at odds with whatever was defined as "normal." They asserted that the line between "normal" and "abnormal" was always socially constructed, however, and that, in fact, all gender and sexual categories were artificial and changing. Some theorists celebrated all efforts at blurring or bending categories, viewing any sort of identity as both false and oppressive and celebrating hybridity and performance. Others had doubts about this, wondering whether one can work to end discrimination against women, African Americans, gay people, or any other group, if one denies that the group has an essential identity, something that makes its members clearly women or African American or gay. In the past several decades, queer theory has been widely applied, as scholars have "queered" – that is, called into question the categories used to describe and analyze – the nation, race, religion, and other topics along with gender and sexuality. This broadening has led some – including a few of the founders of the field – to wonder whether queer theory loses its punch when everything is queer, but it continues to be an influential theoretical perspective.

Related questions about identity, subjectivity, and the cultural construction of difference have also emerged from postcolonial theory and critical race theory. Postcolonial history and theory were initially associated with South Asian scholars and the book series Subaltern Studies, and focused on people who have been subordinated (the meaning of subaltern) by virtue of their race, class, culture, or language as part of the process of colonization and imperialism in the modern world. Critical race theory developed in the 1980s as an outgrowth (and critique) of the civil rights movement combined with ideas derived from critical legal studies, a radical group of legal scholars who argued that supposedly neutral legal concepts such as the individual or meritocracy actually masked power relationships. Historians of Europe and the United States are increasingly applying insights from both of these theoretical schools to their own work, particularly as they investigate subordinate groups such as racial and ethnic minorities. World historians also now often use ideas developed by postcolonial theorists to analyze relationships of power in all chronological periods, not simply eras of imperialism.

An important concept in much postcolonial and critical race theory has been the notion of hegemony, initially developed by the Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci. Today hegemony and domination are often used interchangeably, but in Gramsci's view, they are not the same. Hegemony involves convincing dominated groups to acquiesce to the desires and systems of the dominators through cultural as well as military and political means. Generally this was accomplished by granting special powers and privileges to some individuals and groups from among the subordinated population, or by convincing them through education or other forms of socialization that the new system was beneficial or preferable. The notion of hegemony explains why small groups of people have been able to maintain control over much larger populations without constant rebellion and protest, though some scholars have argued that the emphasis on hegemony downplays the ability of subjugated peoples to recognize the power realities in which they are enmeshed and to shape their own history. Many historians have used the concept of hegemony to examine the role of high-status women, who gained power over subordinate men and women through their relationships with high-status men, and thus paid little attention to or chose not to protest their own subordination to men. The Australian sociologist R. W. Connell has also applied the idea of hegemony to studies of masculinity, noting that in every culture one form of masculinity is hegemonic, but men who are excluded from that particular form still benefit from male privilege, which they exploit rather than opposing the men who have power over them.

Both postcolonial and critical race theory point out that racial, ethnic, and other hierarchies are deeply rooted social and cultural principles, not simply aberrations that can be remedied by laws protecting individuals from discriminaton. They note that along with disenfranchising certain groups, such hierarchies privilege certain groups, a phenomenon that is analyzed under the rubric of critical white studies. (This is a pattern similar to the growth of men's studies out of women's studies, and there is a parallel development in the historical study of heterosexuality, which has grown out of LGBT history.) Unsurprisingly, such explorations of white privilege and structural racism have proven threatening to some, with conservative political and media figures, especially in the United States, stoking white rage with broad attacks on critical race theory, and state legislatures passing bans on anti-racism instruction or even any discussion of systemic racism in the schools.

Queer theory, postcolonial studies, and critical race theory have all been criticized from both inside and outside for falling into the pattern set by traditional history, that is, regarding the male experience as normative and paying insufficient attention to gender differences. These criticisms led to theoretical perspectives that attempt to recognize multiple lines of difference and their intersections, such as critical race feminism

and Third World and transnational feminism. Both Third World feminism, which developed in the 1970s, and transnational feminism, which developed in the 1990s, critique the underpinnings of colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism, including those that contributed to the rise of Western feminism in its various waves. Drawing on postcolonial history and theory, transnational feminist scholars have focused on processes of subordination, relations between gender and power across boundaries defined by nations, individual and institutional cross-border networks and dynamics, the impact of global migration on family life, gendered and sexualized nationality, affective and intimate relationships in imperial contexts, and many other topics. Such scholarship has begun to influence many areas of gender studies, even those that do not deal explicitly with race or colonialism. It appears that this cross-fertilization will continue, as issues of difference and identity are clearly key topics for historians in the ever more connected twenty-first-century world.

Gender History as a Field

This discussion of scholarly trends may make it appear as if using gender as a category of analysis has swept the discipline of history, with scholars simply choosing the approach or topic they prefer. This is far from the actual situation. There are still many historians who continue to view focusing on gender as a new-fangled fad, or, conversely, as an old-fashioned approach no longer needed in postfeminist world. As noted above, until very recently, books that explicitly take a world, global, or transnational perspective have focused largely on economic and political developments without examining their gendered nature. Other historians invoke "gender" without really thinking through its implications for their interpretations of the past. Though titles like "man the artist" have largely disappeared, as most authors – or their editors – have recognized their false universality, books still divide their subjects into "artists" and "women artists" or "rulers" and "women rulers."

Studies of women and gender are also very unevenly distributed geographically and chronologically. Books on women's experience or that use gender as a category of analysis in the twentieth-century United States or early modern England, for example, number in the hundreds, while those that focus on Kiribati or Kazakhstan may be counted on one hand. This unevenness is related, not surprisingly, to uneven growth in women's and gender studies programs, which is in turn related to the structure of higher education around the world and the ability or willingness of institutions of higher education to include new perspectives and programs. By the late 1970s, hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada

offered courses in women's history, and many had separate programs in women's history or women's studies. Universities in Britain, Australia, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries added courses and programs a bit more slowly, and other developed countries were slower still, though by the 1990s courses in women's history were introduced in India, China, Korea, and elsewhere, especially at women's universities. In Japan and elsewhere, much of the research on women has been done by people outside the universities involved with local history societies or women's groups, so has not been regarded as scholarly.

Scholars and students in some countries in the early twenty-first century still report that investigating the history of women, gender, or sexuality can get them pegged as less than serious and be detrimental to their future careers as historians. Added to this is backlash against women's and LGBTQ+ rights, and sometimes to the entire concept of gender, in countries headed by authoritarian men who advocate traditional gender roles. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, for example, elected in 2018, has attacked what he terms "gender ideology," by which he means policies aimed at improving gender equality and lessening homophobia. Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán offered tax benefits and subsidies to women who had at least four children and banned gender studies from Hungarian universities. In 2020 the Hungarian Parliament voted to stop transgender and intersex people from legally changing their gender. Gender- and sexuality-based violence has increased in Brazil and Hungary, as well as in other countries with right-wing populists in charge.

The history done in any country, not simply Brazil and Hungary, is shaped by regional and world politics, and issues other than gender have often seemed more pressing to historians in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and other parts of the world where political and economic struggles have been intense. Universities and researchers in developing countries also have far fewer resources, which has hampered all historical research and limited opportunities for any new direction. Thus an inordinate amount of the work in the history of women, gender, and sexuality, including that which focuses on the continent of Europe and many other parts of the world, has been done by English-speaking historians, and the amount of research on English-speaking areas far outweighs that on the rest of the world. There is also imbalance within English-speaking areas, for studies of the United States vastly outnumber those of anywhere else.

There are signs that this imbalance is changing somewhat, as organizations to promote the history of women, gender and sexuality, and academic women's/gender/sexuality studies programs are gradually being established in more countries, sometimes at great risk to those who organize them. Yet the head start of English-language scholarship, combined with the ability of many students and scholars throughout the world to read English – and the

inability of many English-speaking students and scholars to read anything but English – have meant that the exchange of theoretical insights and research results has to this point been largely a one-way street.

Structure of the Book

The dominance of English-language scholarship is both a blessing and a curse for the purposes of this book. Because of the book's intended audience of students as well as scholars, I decided to include only English-language materials in the suggestion for further reading that follow each chapter, and to make these brief. You can trust that these works contain much of the newest and best research available, and they point to materials in other languages, but they represent only a small fraction of what is there. To explore any topic fully, you will need to go far beyond them, and in many cases, as with any historical topic, to read source materials, analyses, and theoretical discussions in other languages as well.

Organizing a brief book on a subject this huge was a challenge, made even greater by the fact that a key theme in women's and gender history has been the arbitrary and artificial nature of all boundaries – chronological, national, methodological, sexual. Thus for the first two editions of this book, I decided to organize the book topically rather than geographically or chronologically, in order to highlight the specific connections between gender and other structures and institutions. Each topical chapter investigated the ways in which what it meant to be male and female was shaped by such aspects of society as economic or religious structures, and also explored the reverse – how gender in turn shaped work, for example, or religious institutions.

For this third edition, I decided to reorganize the book completely, and, beginning with Chapter 3, present the material chronologically, with each chapter covering a shorter time frame than its predecessor. This decision was in part a response to comments from faculty who have used the book that a chronological organization would better meet their needs and those of their students. Each chapter incorporates material that was in the topical chapters, including discussion of the family, religion, politics, economic issues, culture, and sexuality, as well as new information based on the scholarship of the past decade. Each chapter discusses many of the world's cultures, notes both distinctions among them and links between them, and suggests possible reasons for variations among cultures and among different social, ethnic, and racial groups within one culture.

Chapter 2 is an update of what was Chapter 4 in the previous editions, and looks at key ideas and ideals that emerged in a number of cultures and then shaped the informal norms and more formalized laws regulating every

realm of life. This is not to say that these concepts were the same everywhere or that they did not change over time, but that there have been significant similarities, parallels, and continuities across time and space. These include: ideas about the nature and proper roles of men and women, what is often termed masculinity and femininity or manhood and womanhood; binaries related to male/female binaries, including nature/culture, public/private, inner/outer, order/disorder, rational/passionate; norms and laws regarding motherhood and fatherhood; ideas and laws prescribing male dominance and female subservience and dependence; ideas and laws promoting gender egalitarianism.

The chronological chapters begin with Chapter 3. Just as they have de-emphasized the nation as the most significant geographic unit, most global historians have also de-emphasized the invention of writing as a sharp dividing line in human history. With this the border between archaeology and history disappears, and the Paleolithic (2,000,000–9500 BCE) and Neolithic (9500 BCE–3000 BCE) become part of history rather than "prehistory." Chapter 3 covers these eras. It begins with the evolution of hominids, looks at Paleolithic society and culture, examines the impact of domestication and the development of agriculture in the Neolithic on gender roles and relationships, and ends with a discussion of debates over the origins of patriarchy.

Chapter 4 examines the growth of cities and larger-scale political structures in the period from roughly 3000 BCE to roughly 500 BCE. It explores the more complex gender hierarchies that developed in cities and states and the ways writing facilitated this process; looks at work and family life; analyzes the religious traditions of the ancient Near East, including Judaism; and considers the growth of hereditary dynasties, which transmitted power through lineages of elites. Chapter 5 focuses on the classical cultures of Eurasia in the period from 500 BCE to 500 CE. It begins with the family and sexuality, examines the growth and spread of religious traditions, including Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, and the ways these shaped family life and social practices, and ends with a discussion of education and culture. Chapter 6 investigates the thousand years between 500 CE and 1500 CE. It examines patterns in family life and religious traditions that endured for a long time in Africa, the Americas and the Pacific, the growth of large-scale states in the Americas, and the development of courtly societies across much of the world. It traces the origin and spread of Islam, developments in Europe and the Mediterranean, and the way growing cities created opportunities that were shaped by gender.

Chapter 7 focuses on the early modern period, from 1500 to 1800. It examines economic transformations, especially the growth of capitalism; the Renaissance, Reformation, and spread of Christianity around the world; how colonialism shaped families and gendered ideas of race; and connections between gender and political life. Chapter 8 explores the modern

world, from 1800 to today. It begins with industrialization, tracing its spread around the world and the way it facilitated imperial conquests, which simultaneously challenged and reinforced existing gender hierarchies and social patterns. It then looks at movements for social change, and the development of what has been called "modern" sexuality. Moving into the twentieth century, it examines wars, revolutions, and political change, further developments in the industrial and postindustrial economy, changes in family life and structures, and cultural shifts. The still-short twenty-first century is part of all of these, and the book ends where we are now, in the midst of a global pandemic, with implications for issues related to gender that have already been recognized but whose scope is still unknown. The instructor's companion site to this book has links to original sources, both textual and visual, along with extended suggestions for further reading. It can be accessed here: www.wiley.com\go\wiesner-hanks\genderinhistory3e

I certainly could not cover every topic everywhere, so I have chosen to highlight specific developments and issues within certain cultures that have proven to be especially significant. World historians emphasize that variations in both chronological and geographic scale are important tools of understanding, and I have used this insight here. The book is based on my own research and that of many people who examine what the (incomplete) written and material record reveals about the past. Much of that record is the story of women's subordination, which may make you, as the reader, feel angry, depressed, or defensive. If you do, please remember that this is not a book about what might have been, what should be, or what could happen in the future; that I leave to philosophers, ethicists, theologians, and you.

Further Reading

Major collections of articles on the history of women and gender around the world include Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *A Companion to Global Gender History* (2nd edn., Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2021) and Bonnie G. Smith, ed., *Women's History in Global Perspective* (3 vols., Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004). On the history of sexuality, see Mathew Kuefler, ed., *The History of Sexuality Sourcebook* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

Joan Scott's widely reprinted article, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91:5 (1986), 1053–75, remains essential reading, as evidenced by the recent *AHR* Forum: "Revisiting 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,'" *American Historical Review*, 113:5 (2008), 1344–430, which has articles by six historians about gender history around the world and a response by Scott. An